SOME PALATINE ASPECTS OF THE CAPPELLA PALATINA IN PALERMO

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The Cappella Palatina in Palermo is probably the best known, if not the best understood, monument of Norman architecture and art in Sicily.[1] It was built by the most enterprising of all Norman kings of Sicily, Roger II (1130–54). Begun probably shortly after his coronation in 1130, the Cappella was issued a major royal charter in 1140, and its mosaic decoration was at least par-

tially in place by 1143.[2] The decoration of the Cappella was completed only under Roger's son and successor, William I (1154–66), though probably following the original conception of the program.[3] The purpose of this paper is not to undertake a new and complete study of the Cappella Palatina, nor is it to reevaluate the state of scholarship on the subject. My aim will simply be to explore further some of its intrinsic functional and related symbolic and iconographic aspects. My study owes its point of departure to the seminal article on the mosaics of the Cappella Palatina by Ernst Kitzinger, to whom I gratefully dedicate this contribution.[4]

I

The Cappella Palatina, as its name clearly suggests, belongs to a special category of buildings that we refer to as "palace churches" or "palace chapels." Within this category, chronologically confined to the medieval period, the Cappella Palatina is a unique monument by virtue of having preserved its decorative program essentially intact. Thus the Cappella Palatina presents us with special opportunities to examine some broader issues pertaining to the function, symbolism, and iconography of palatine chapels in general.

[1] Scholarly literature on the Cappella Palatina is considerable, yet no exhaustive monograph on all aspects of the building has thus far been written. The architecture of the Cappella Palatina is its least studied aspect. Numerous short accounts do exist, the most useful one being G. Di Stefano, *Monumenti della Sicilia normanna*, 2nd ed. with additions by W. Krönig (Palermo, 1979), 37–40, with a thorough, up-to-date bibliography. The architecture of the Cappella Palatina and its relationship to the Cathedral of Monreale is discussed by W. Krönig, *The Cathedral of Monreale and Norman Architecture in Sicily* (Palermo, 1965), 172–75. More numerous, and more fruitful, have been the studies of its interior decoration and particularly of its mosaics. The pioneering modern study of the mosaics is E. Kitzinger, "The Mosaics of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo: An Essay on the Choice and Arrangement of Subjects," *ArtB* 31 (1949), 269–92, citing older literature; also rpr. in idem, *The Art of Byzantium and the Medieval West*, ed. W. E. Kleinbauer (Bloomington-London, 1976), 290–319, with a postscript, 394. Virtually simultaneously appeared O. Demus, *The Mosaics of Norman Sicily* (London, 1949), 25–72. More recently I. Beck, "The First Mosaics of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo," *Byz* 40 (1971), 119–64, has offered a holistic interpretation of the subject, while two larger studies: B. Rocco, "I mosaici delle chiese normanne in Sicilia. Sguardo teologico, biblico, liturgico," *Ho Theologos* 11–12 (1976), 122–72; pt. 2, ibid., 17 (1978), 9–68, and N. Nercessian, *The Cappella Palatina of Roger II. The Relationship of Its Imagery to Its Political Function*, Diss. (Univ. of Calif., Los Angeles, 1981), have provided widely differing but equally selective approaches to the problems.

[2] Di Stefano, *Monumenti*, 38.

[3] The exact location of the demarcation line between the work executed under Roger II and that under his son, William I, is still debated. The generally accepted view that this demarcation line coincides with the triumphal arch separating the domed portion from the basilican portion of the building was challenged by Demus, *Mosaics of Norman Sicily*, 218 f. Demus' conclusions were rejected by E. Kitzinger in his review of Demus' book; *Speculum* 28 (1953), 143–50, esp. 146–48. The unity of the program in the domed part of the building is emphasized again by Beck, "First Mosaics," 119–20 and passim. In my opinion, there is no apparent reason to think that the decoration as executed was different from what may have been planned from the outset.

[4] Kitzinger, "Mosaics."

The elongated form of the Cappella Palatina (Fig. 1), with its centralized eastern part and its basilican western section with a wooden roof, has been interpreted as a characteristically local "hybrid" of Byzantine and western architectural schemes.[5] Comparanda for such an interpretation of its form are easily provided by alluding, among others, to the great cathedrals of the Norman period at Cefalù and Monreale. Setting aside this characteristic of the Cappella Palatina for a moment, we should turn our attention to another aspect of its architecture which received only limited notice in the past—its two-storied arrangement. It was André Grabar and, following him, Wolfgang Krönig who stressed the importance of the two-level arrangement.[6] Their analysis, however, led them to western medieval palace chapels focusing on a number of German two-storied palace churches ("Doppelkapellen") in which a direct spatial link between the two stories is established through a central opening. Noting the absence of such a link in the Cappella Palatina, Kitzinger correctly rejected associations with these western examples and assigned its lower story the status of a "crypt."[7] In more recent times, Ingamaj Beck has associated the two-storied arrangement with the tradition of Byzantine palace chapels.[8] While her basic notion was a correct one, the examples that she used to demonstrate her points were, in my opinion, the wrong choices. Without wishing to enter the current controversy regarding Byzantine palace chapels, I believe that the Cappella Palatina *does* belong to the Byzantine, more specifically Middle Byzantine, palatine tradition.[9] As I hope to demonstrate, this connection is to be found on the conceptual as well as on the functional levels.

The lower story of the Cappella Palatina features a plan that relates to the upper story only in part. The eastern section of the lower story has a three-aisled arrangement that echoes the layout of the sanctuary area above.[10] Two staircases lead di-

rectly from the side aisles of the chapel into the lower story (Fig. 1). To my knowledge, the role of these stairs has never been discussed, though they clearly represent an integral part of the original planning scheme of the chapel. They must have been intended for either descending into or ascending from the lower story. I shall return to this functional consideration in the last section of this article. At this point, what needs to be recognized as an important architectural feature of the chapel is that it actually was two-storied and that the two stories were linked functionally.

The two-storied arrangement of the chapel was, furthermore, formally expressed in its south facade. At present it is obscured by the three-storied late Renaissance Cortile "Maqueda" constructed in 1600. Behind the two lower superimposed arcades of the Cortile "Maqueda," on its north side, one can see the partially restored remnants of the original facade of the Cappella Palatina. This facade consisted of a solid wall made of regular ashlar blocks and was perforated by small lancet windows. The second story, by contrast, displayed a freestanding arcade, consisting of one large and five small pointed stilted arches (Fig. 3). Behind this arcade and, correspondingly, behind the windowed wall on the lower level, we find two narrow passageways that parallel, but are physically separated from, the south aisle of the chapel and the corresponding spaces on the lower level (Fig. 4). The original two-storied facade of the chapel would have been visible from a courtyard whose location roughly coincided with the present Cortile "Maqueda" (Fig. 2).[11] The visual impression a viewer in the courtyard would have had would have corresponded to that of a late antique or a Byzantine palace facade, with a series of open arcades supported on a relatively solid ground floor. The sea facade of the Palace of Diocletian at Split is but the best known and the most monumental surviving example.[12] The chronological distance between the Palace of Diocletian and the Cappella Palatina could make such a comparison suspect. We do have, however, surviving contemporary evidence in Russia, where such solutions must be understood as reflecting the knowledge of the

[5] Ibid., 270.

[6] A. Grabar, *Martyrium*, I (Paris, 1947), 577 note 1; W. Krönig, "Zur Transfiguration der Cappella Palatina in Palermo," *ZKunstw* 19, no. 2 (1956), 162–79, esp. 168 f.

[7] Kitzinger, "Mosaics," 270 note 6.

[8] Beck, "First Mosaics," esp. 125–29 and 156–60.

[9] A major scholarly controversy regarding the form and function of "palace churches" in the Byzantine world has flared up in recent years. For a convenient summary of the main issues and the relevant literature see R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, Pelican History of Art, 3rd ed. (Harmondsworth, 1981), 491 note 22; 513 note 22.

[10] F. Pottino, "La cripta della Cappella Palatina in Palermo," *AStSic*, 3rd ser., 15 (1965), 7–26.

[11] Fig. 2 is based on the drawing by F. Valenti, published in G. Giacomazzi, *Il palazzo che fu dei re. Divagazione storico-artistica sul palazzo dei normanni* (Palermo, 1959), fig. 21.

[12] J. B. Ward-Perkins, *Roman Imperial Architecture*, Pelican History of Art, 2nd ed. (Harmondsworth-New York, 1981), 454 and fig. 310; also K. M. Swoboda, "The Problem of Iconography of Late Antique and Early Medieval Palaces," *JSAH* 20, no. 2 (1961), esp. 79.

Constantinopolitan scene. The first of these examples is a fresco in the stair tower leading to the gallery of the cathedral church of Saint Sophia in Kiev. Painted in 1113–25, this fresco is believed to depict the so-called Kathisma Palace within the Hippodrome at Constantinople (Fig. 5).[13] The Kathisma facade, as depicted in this fresco, illustrates a solid lower story enclosed by a massive ashlar wall pierced only by a few windows. Above, two tiers of superimposed arcades accommodate spectators, while the emperor stands within the large arcuated imperial box on the far right, where he would receive public acclamations.[14] The incorporation of an architecturally accentuated "window of appearances" into palace facades was a common practice from Antiquity through the Renaissance.[15] The design of the south, courtyard facade of the Cappella Palatina was probably conceived along these lines, providing a stage for royal appearances to the crowds assembled in the courtyard below.

The Kathisma fresco from Kiev was not merely an abstract illustration of a bygone age in a foreign cultural context. Its relevance for the contemporary Russian scene is gleaned from the palace complex of Prince Andrei Bogoljubski at Bogoljubovo, built between 1158 and 1165.[16] Here we see a large palace complex that involves a number of towered structures, connected by elevated walkways and linked to the prominently situated palace chapel. The court facade of the chapel and the adjacent structures featured an undecorated wall in the lower part, with an arcaded upper story. Only part of this upper arcade was actually open, while most of it appeared in the form of a blind arcade. It could be argued that this blind arcade was merely an external decorative feature, stylistically akin to western Romanesque corbeled table friezes. It is equally plausible, however, that the characteristic division of the facade into an undecorated lower story, topped by a visually "lighter" upper story,

has its sources in palatine iconography. I shall refrain from pursuing that issue further at this time.

II

I shall turn my attention next to the iconographic program of mosaic decoration in the eastern, domed part of the Cappella Palatina. The Byzantine character and idiosyncratic nature of this program were recognized long ago and have been the subject of discussion of most art historical literature dealing with the Cappella Palatina. Thanks to Ernst Kitzinger, we have come to understand the link between certain functional aspects of the chapel, its decorative program, and the reasons behind the placement of certain compositions.[17] It was Kitzinger who formulated the notion of the "royal view" by demonstrating the link between the Entry into Jerusalem on the south wall of the chapel and the position of the royal box on its north side (Figs. 6 and 7).[18] Kitzinger's association of the Entry into Jerusalem with *adventus* iconography enabled him to bring into sharp focus the intimate relationship between the "religious" and "secular" realms at the court of Palermo. This theme, which he also recognized elsewhere, was rightly associated with Byzantine imperial traditions and related iconography.[19] Kitzinger's fruitful analysis of the Cappella Palatina, I believe, can be carried one step further.

Directly above the scene depicting the Entry into Jerusalem one finds the scene of the Transfiguration (Fig. 7), situated roughly in the geometric center of the south transept wall. This scene has attracted some scholarly attention but not, in my opinion, for reasons that are of central importance.[20] The Transfiguration, one of the standard twelve scenes of the decorative program in Middle Byzantine churches, also displays standard Byzantine iconography.[21] Christ is the central figure in the composition. He is shown frontally, blessing with his right hand. He is standing on the top of a steep mound and is framed by a mandorla of light

[13] V. Lazarev, *Old Russian Murals and Mosaics* (London, 1966), 236–40, fig. 28.

[14] E. H. Kantorowicz, "Oriens Augusti—lever du roi," *DOP* 17 (1963), 149–62, esp. 158.

[15] For a useful survey of this and related concepts see A. Reinle, *Zeichensprache der Architektur. Symbol, Darstellung und Brauch in der Baukunst des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit* (Zurich-Munich, 1976), esp. 305–30 ("Der erhöhte Ehrenplatz").

[16] N. N. Voronin, *Zodchestvo severno-vostochnoi Rusi XII–XV vekov*, I (Moscow, 1961), 201–61, fig. 126. The functional aspects of the two-storied arrangement in the palace tradition of late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages are discussed by C. Mango, *The Brazen House. A Study of the Vestibule of the Imperial Palace of Constantinople* (Copenhagen, 1959), 87–92.

[17] Kitzinger, "Mosaics" (above, note 1).

[18] Ibid., 300–301.

[19] E. Kitzinger, "On the Portrait of Roger II in the Martorana in Palermo," *Proporzioni* 3 (1950), 30–35; also rpr. in idem, *Art of Byzantium* (above, note 1), 320–26.

[20] Krönig, "Zur Transfiguration" (above, note 6).

[21] On the place of the Transfiguration scene in the "standard" Middle Byzantine festival cycle see O. Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration. Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium* (Boston, 1964), 22 f. On the iconography see K. Weitzmann, *The Icon. Holy Images—Sixth to Fourteenth Century* (New York, 1978), 86, 94, and pls. 24 and 28.

with five emanating rays that link him with the other actors in the composition. To his right and left and standing atop two mounds are two Prophets—Moses and Elijah; at the bottom appear three awe-stricken Apostles—Peter, James, and John. The scene faithfully illustrates the New Testament account of the event that took place on Mount Tabor.[22] The inclusion of this scene in a program that clearly depended on the typical Middle Byzantine system of church decoration is, if anything, a predictable occurrence. The significance of the Cappella Palatina Transfiguration lies in its relative position on the south wall of the transept. In its physical placement on the wall it is the Transfiguration, and not the Entry into Jerusalem, that represents an exact pendant to the royal box on the opposite, north wall (Fig. 6). This juxtaposition was, in my opinion, by no means fortuitous. The Transfiguration is, by definition, a theophany—a revelation of Godhead. The formal appearance of the king within the architectural setting of the royal box had related, if not identical, connotations.[23] As in other contexts, this would have been yet another allusion to the parallel between the king and Christ.[24] Such ideas were rooted in Byzantine literature but, as far as we can tell, were not employed in Byzantine art.[25] Visual expression of the ruler-Christ parallel is known in medieval Serbia, suggesting that the case of Roger II may not have been an isolated occurrence and that some

Byzantine imperial portraits, now lost, may have provided common prototypes.[26]

The iconographic similarities between the Transfiguration scene and the royal appearance within his box deserve further attention. Using the available archeological evidence, Beck has already suggested that the royal box in the north wall of the Cappella Palatina had the appearance of a triple window, in which the king could have appeared flanked by his two sons (or courtiers).[27] While this arrangement no doubt alludes to late antique representations of the Emperor in majesty, as Beck has suggested, the formal resemblance of this "trio" to the representation of Christ flanked by Moses and Elijah, on the opposite wall, is equally striking and important. The similarity between the occupants of the royal box and the Transfiguration scene should also be extended to refer to the fact that the royal box is actually in a physically elevated position.[28] Thus, to his subjects below (albeit possibly clergy alone), the king would have appeared *elevated,* as did Christ to his disciples on top of Mount Tabor. The fallen apostles have the same relationship to the transfigured Christ as would loyal subjects in the presence of their ruler. Proskynesis was a ritual expression of awe in Byzantine court ceremonial, as we know from a detailed description from the pen of a skeptical westerner, Liutprand of Cremona.[29] Liutprand's text leaves no doubt as to the carefully orchestrated ceremony with calculated effects on the audience. He explains that after he had prostrated himself three times and lifted his head, he was shocked to find that the emperor, who had been seated on a throne at eye-level, was elevated as high as the ceiling of the hall and was wearing to-

[22] Matt. 17:1–9.

[23] On the subject of imperial appearances in Early Christian and early medieval art in the West see J. K. Eberlein, *Apparitio regis—revelatio veritatis. Studien zur Darstellung des Vorhangs in der bildenden Kunst von der Spätantike bis zum Ende des Mittelalters* (Wiesbaden, 1982), passim. For the Byzantine imperial adoration see A. Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantin* (Paris, 1936), esp. 85–88. The ceremony of imperial acclamation, which was traditionally held in the Hippodrome in Constantinople in the later Byzantine period (possibly as early as the second half of the 12th century), was replaced by a ceremony known as the *prokypsis;* on this see M. A. Andreeva, "O tseremoni 'Prokipsis'," *SK* 1 (1927), 157–73, and also Pseudo-Kodinos, *Traité des offices,* trans. and ed. J. Verpeaux (Paris, 1966), 196–98.

[24] Kitzinger, "Portrait," 31, refers to a homily by a monk, Philagathos, delivered at the Norman court in praise of King Roger II. In it, Philagathos addresses the king as σωτήρ (savior) and χριστομίμητος (Christlike). The portrait of King Roger at the Martorana graphically illustrates this concept. On this see also E. H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, 1957), 65.

[25] P. Magdalino and R. Nelson, "The Emperor in Byzantine Art of the Twelfth Century," *BF* 8 (1982), esp. 133 and 138–39. Kitzinger, "Portrait," 32, suggests that in Byzantium there was "a strong theoretical objection against the portrayal of any other person—and be it the emperor himself—in the likeness of the Saviour," and finds the portrait of Roger II at the Martorana "Byzantine, but with a Western twist."

[26] The Serbian example that has been analyzed in these terms is the portrait of the "Emperor of the Serbs and the Greeks," Stefan Dušan, from Lesnovo Monastery, dated 1349; S. Radojčić, *Portreti srpskih vladara u srednjem veku* (Skoplje, 1934), 56 and pl. 25.

[27] Beck, "First Mosaics," 128–29.

[28] The elevation of the emperor above his subjects was a commonly employed theme in Byzantine art and in real life, with the purpose of emphasizing his supernatural qualities. The subject is treated exhaustively by Kantorowicz, "Oriens Augusti," esp. 149–62.

[29] C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453, Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, 1972), 209–10. Regarding the practice of proskynesis in the emperor's presence see Grabar, *Empereur,* 85 ff, and Magdalino and Nelson, "Emperor," 137 and note 27. Proskynesis was also prescribed in the court ceremonial of Roger II, and it applied to the clergy, including bishops; see D. Mack Smith, *A History of Sicily. Medieval Sicily 800–1713* (New York, 1975), 26.
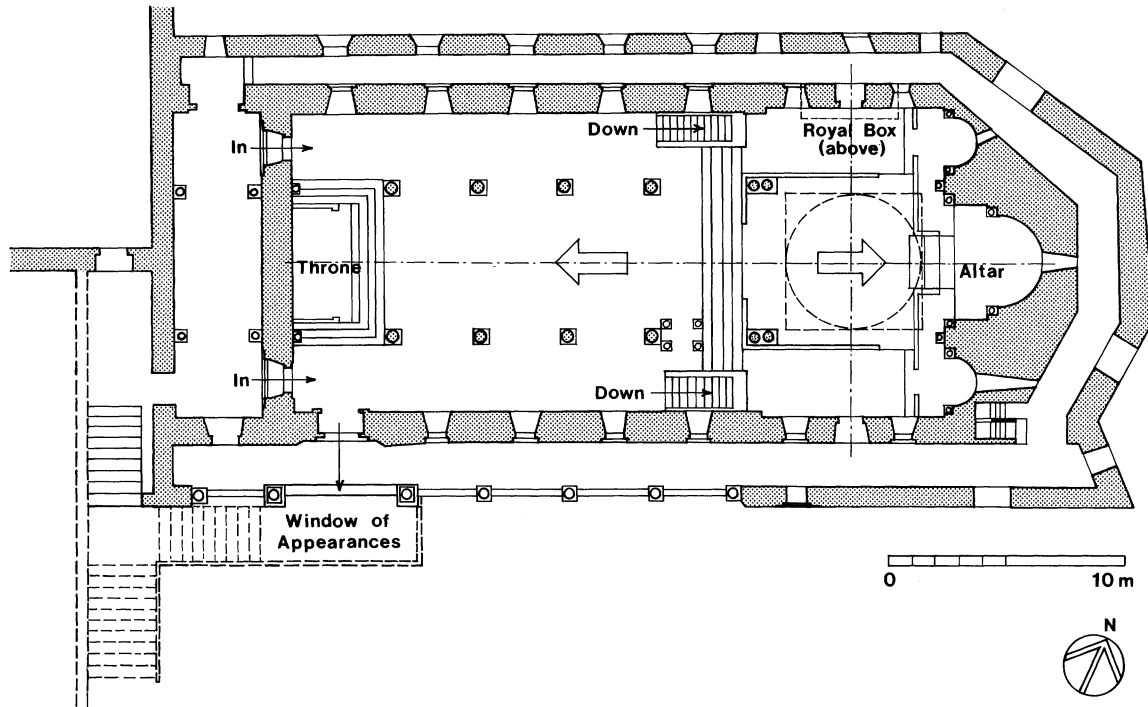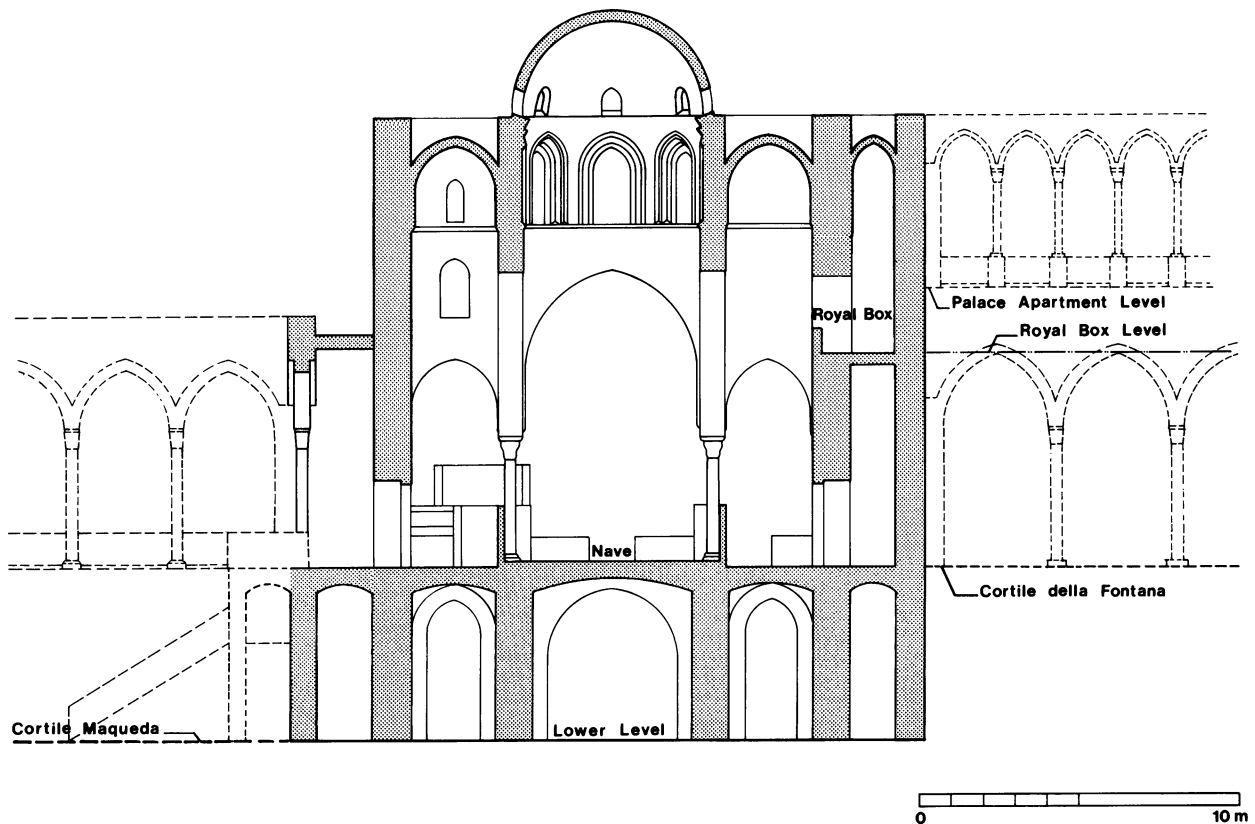
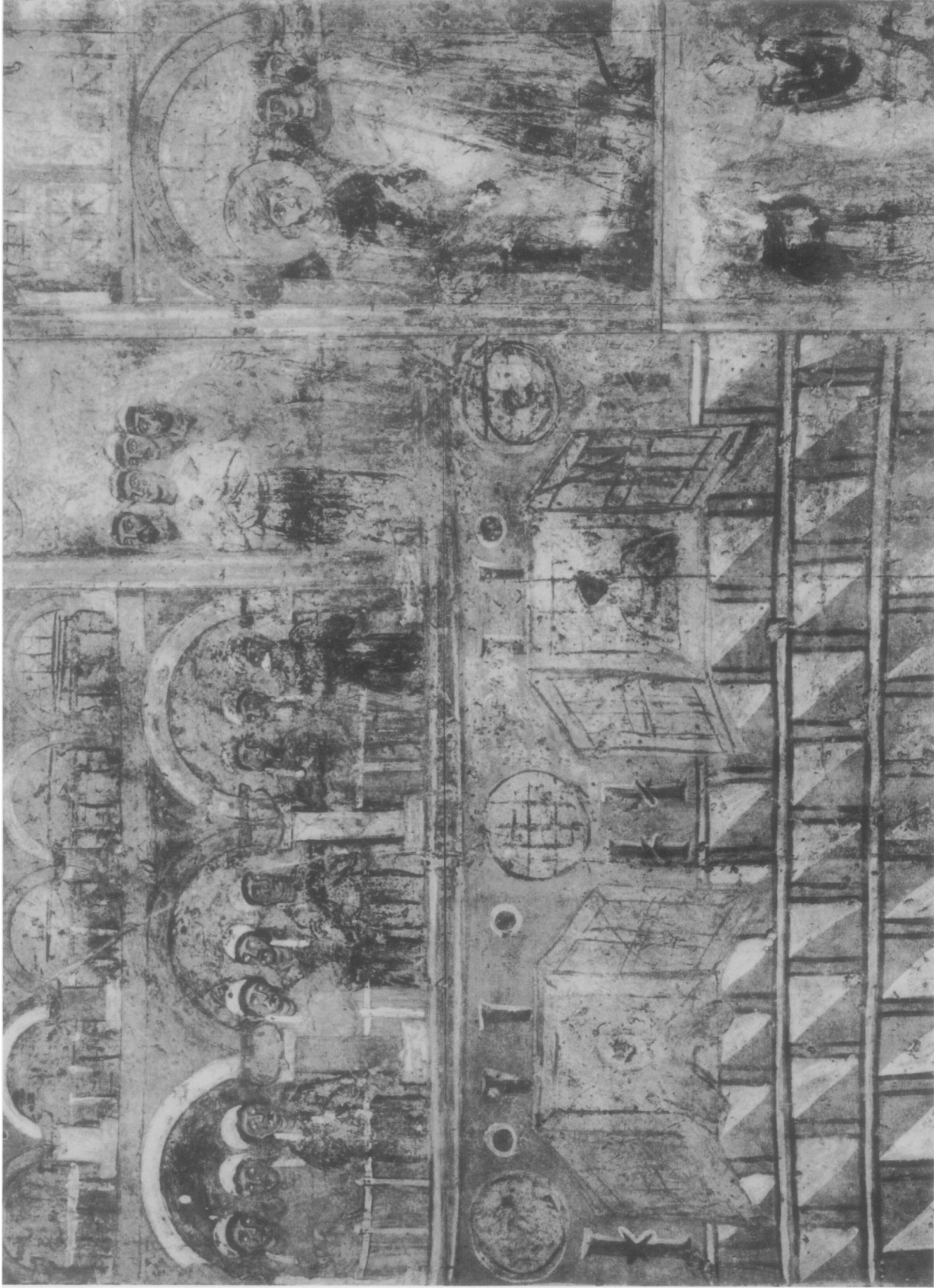1. Palermo, Cappella Palatina, plan (drawing: Nora Laos, after Di Stefano)
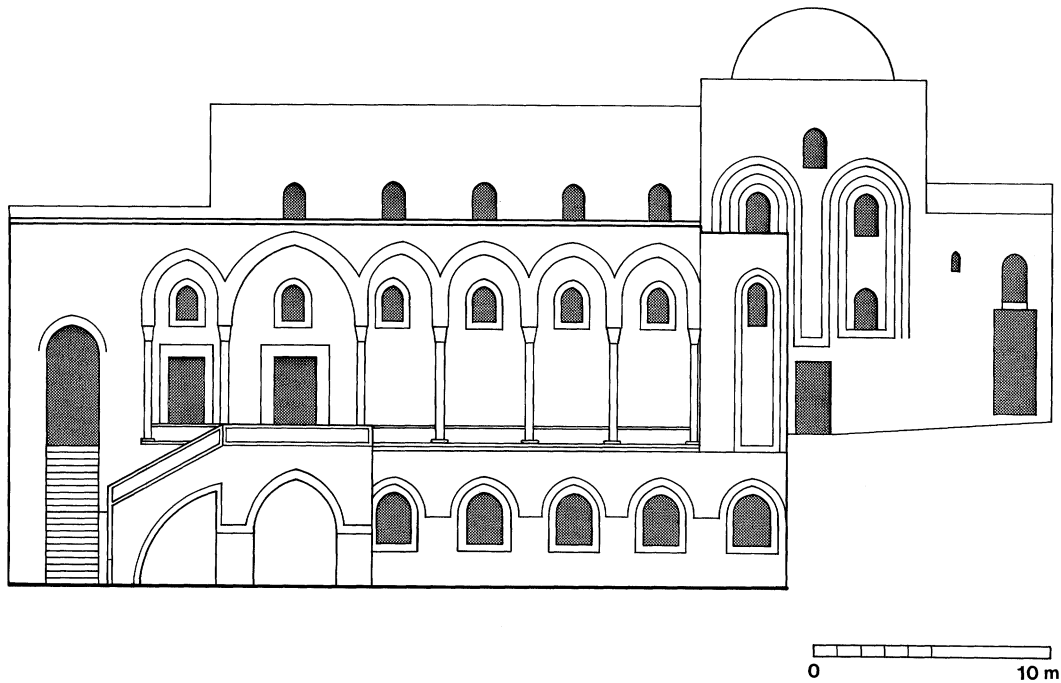
2. Palermo, Cappella Palatina, south facade, hypothetical reconstruction
    (drawing: Nora Laos, after Valenti)

3. Palermo, Cappella Palatina, original south facade, second story arcade

4. Palermo, Cappella Palatina, transverse section looking west and hypothetical relationship to the palace (drawing: Nora Laos)

5. Kiev, St. Sophia, southwest tower fresco, "The Kathisma" (after Lazarev, *Old Russian Murals and Mosaics* [London, 1966], 238, fig. 28)
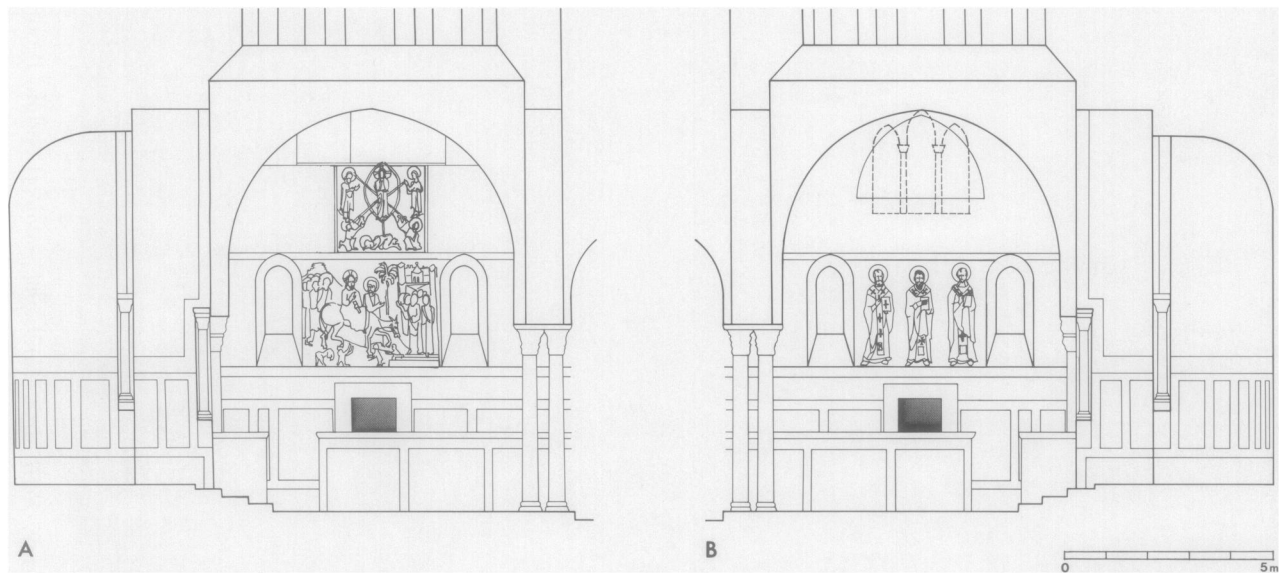
6.   Palermo, Cappella Palatina, longitudinal sections of the domed bay: (a) looking south; (b) looking north
     (drawing: Nora Laos and Susanne Ćurčić)
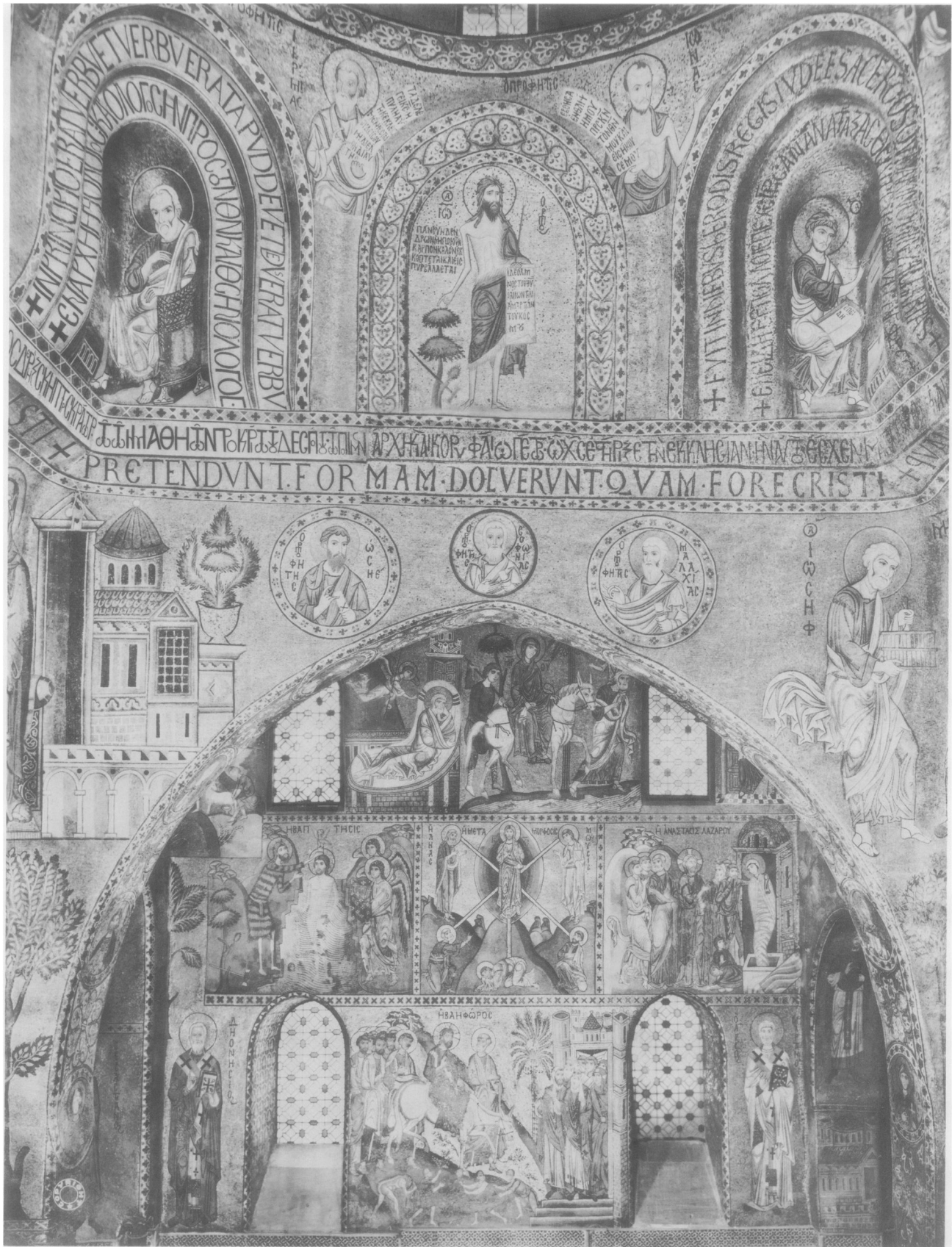
7.   Palermo, Cappella Palatina, domed bay, looking south (photo: Alinari)
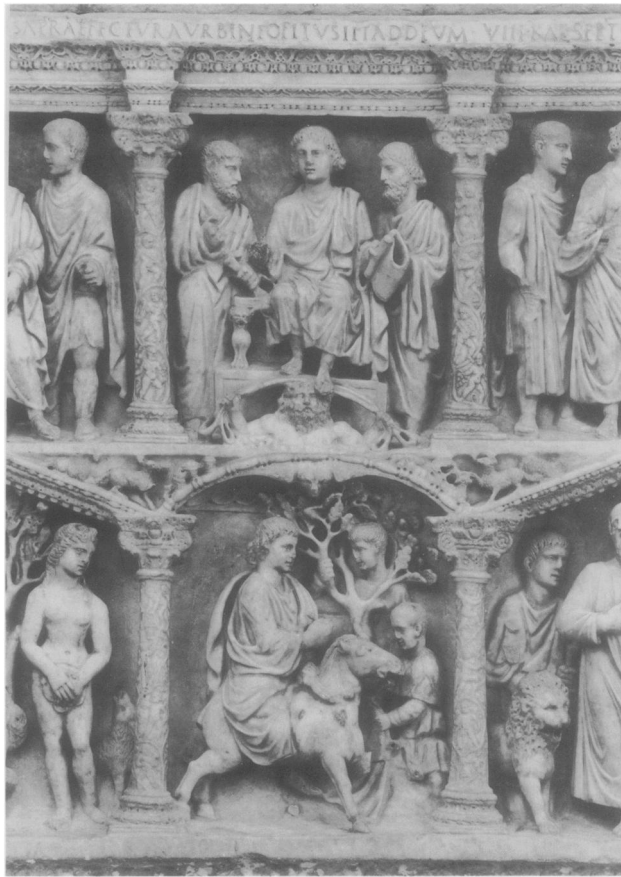
8. Vatican, Reverenda Fabbrica di S. Pietro in
   Vaticano, Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, front
   central panels (photo: Hirmer Fotoarchiv)

9. Palermo, Cappella Palatina, "Transept," north wall, the Three Hierarchs (photo: Alinari)
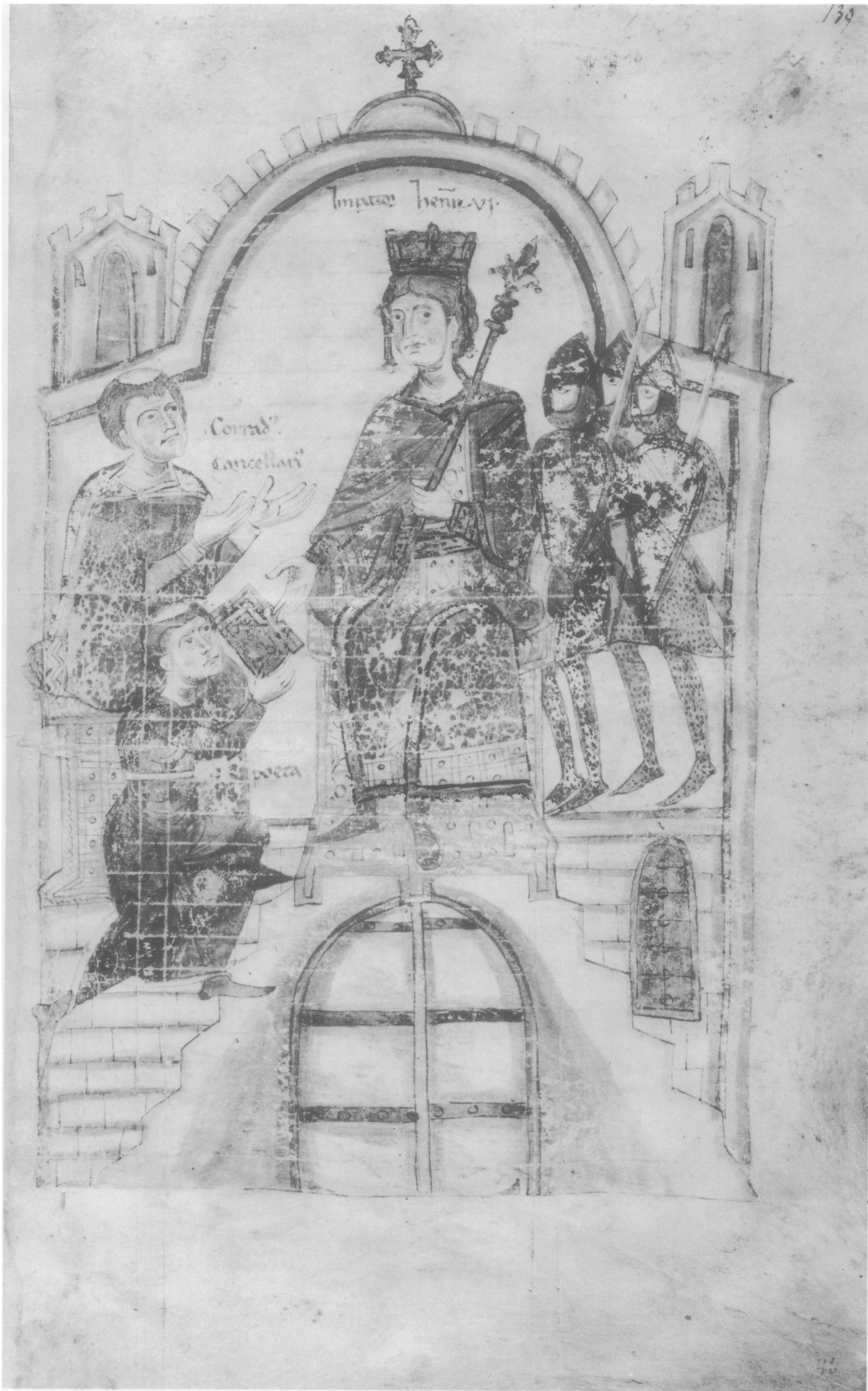
10. Bern, Bürgerbibliothek, Cod. 120, fol. 139, Henry VI receiving a gift from poet Pietro da Eboli (photo: Bürgerbibliothek)

11.   Palermo, Cappella Palatina, "Nave," looking west (photo: Alinari)

12.   Bern, Bürgerbibliothek, Cod. 120, fol. 147, Henry VI on the throne of wisdom
       (photo: Bürgerbibliothek)

13.   Bern, Bürgerbibliothek, Cod. 120, fol. 97, death of William II (photo: Bürgerbibliothek)

tally different attire.[30] Three specific aspects of this text appear to allude to a theophanic experience recalling the Transfiguration. First, the visitor was performing an act of proskynesis as an expression of awe, as was done, albeit unwittingly, by the apostles on Mount Tabor. Second, du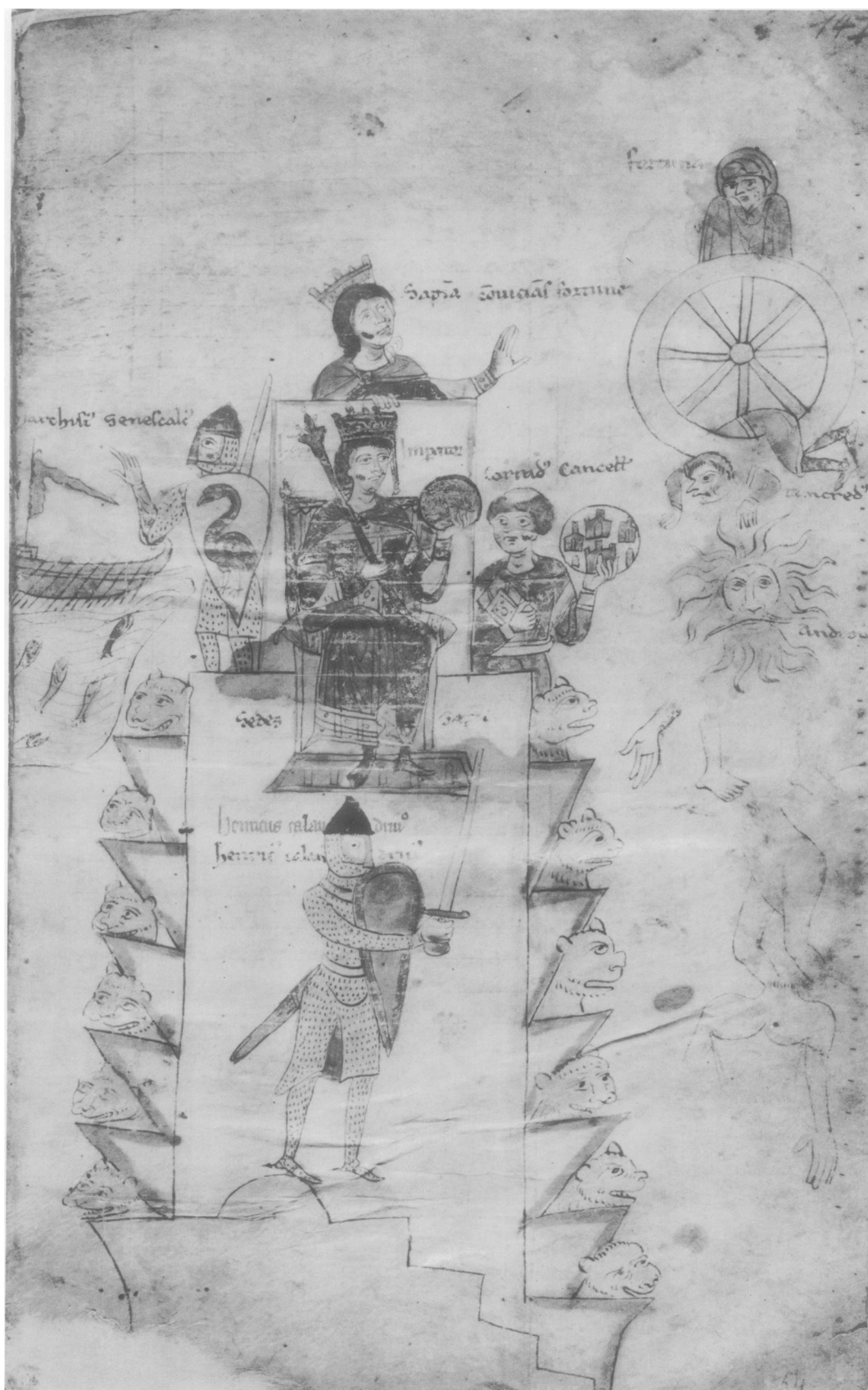ring this ritual, the emperor changed his vestments; in other words, he was "transfigured" in front of the audience, as was Christ before his disciples. Finally, the emperor appeared highly elevated, suggesting the physical as well as spiritual separation between him and the audience, as was the case with the Transfigured Christ upon the peak of Mount Tabor.

This interpretation of the relationship between the Transfiguration scene and the royal box calls for a reexamination of the Entry into Jerusalem and its function in this new iconographic context. If anything, the meaning of this composition within the expanded iconographic framework

would seem to be reinforced. The *adventus* scene is brought into alignment with the theophany; the two form a sequence of eschatological, if not historical, significance. This iconographic juxtaposition is also reinforced by a functional arrangement—the location of the lateral door, directly below the Entry into Jerusalem. This door must have had a liturgical function, possibly related to the iconographic program above it (Fig. 6).

The iconographic juxtaposition of the Entry scene with a theophany above it has its precedent in Early Christian art. The sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, dated by an inscription in the year 359, displays an axial vertical alignment of two scenes: the Entry in the lower tier and a Christ Enthroned, depicted as a universal ruler, above (Fig. 8). The juxtaposition of an *adventus* scene with that of a theophany has been interpreted[31] as a juxtaposition of

[30] Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire,* 209–10.

[31] S. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 1981), 65–67, 130–31; also H. Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* (Princeton, 1981), 71.

a historical event with an eschatological scene in a manner that derives from the imperial art of the Tetrarchic period.

The northern wall of the Cappella Palatina transept has undergone the most drastic changes. The entire upper zone of mosaics, with the scene of St. John preaching in the desert (at the left) and the Agnus Dei in a landscape (at the right), is of a more recent date, executed in conjunction with one of several remodelings of the royal box.[32] Below this we find a zone with the standing figures of five saints. These are the Greek fathers of the church: St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Gregory the Theologian, St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom, and St. Nicholas. The middle three—St. Gregory the Theologian, St. Basil, and St. John Chrysostom— form a trio, separated from the other two by two window openings (Fig. 9). This arrangement is not merely a fortuitous byproduct of the architectural layout. The three central fathers, depicted together, allude to a special joint cult that is celebrated in the Orthodox Church. The cult, known as the cult of the Three Hierarchs (οἱ τρεῖς ἱεράρχαι), was introduced only half a century earlier.[33] The placement of the trio directly below the

royal balcony suggests a formal and iconographic link between the two zones, echoing again the arrangement on the opposite, south chapel wall. In considering the formal aspects of this arrangement one should recall that the royal box above may have had a tripartite form, allowing for the simultaneous appearance of three individuals.[34] The postulated iconographic link between the Three Hierarchs and the royal box implies some sort of an equation between the king and the church fathers. Such a juxtaposition would not have been inappropriate at all, if we remember that Roger II had been granted the status of an apostolic legate by the pope, thus investing him with a degree of autonomy in ecclesiastical jurisdiction within his own state.[35] Thus the north wall of the Cappella Palatina would have been marked by its own vertical axis, relating the different horizontal zones of the decorative and architectural systems. This vertical axis, as was the case with the one on the south side, terminated at the bottom in a door, providing for lateral access into the main space of the chapel.

The presence of a doorway or a passageway *under* a royal balcony or a dais underscores the elevated, exalted position of the king or emperor. It is precisely this kind of "stratification" that underlies the two-storied arrangement of palaces and palace chapels. A graphic illustration of this concept within the Sicilian realm may be gleaned from a late twelfth-century illumination depicting an audience with the King of Sicily and Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI (Fig. 10).[36] The king is shown seated on an elevated dais approached by a series of steps. On these steps stands the king's chancellor Conrad acting as an intercessor for the poet Pietro da Eboli who is shown humbly submitting his work to the king. The royal dais is accommodated within a basilican hall, whose apse is shown in a distorted manner behind the king. Externally

[32] Kitzinger, "Mosaics," 273; also Beck, "First Mosaics," 128, who attributes the Preaching of St. John to one Riolo, and dates it 1838.

[33] The cult of the Three Hierarchs is celebrated in the Orthodox churches on January 30; see *Synaxarium CP,* 434, which cites a Greek Menaion, published in Venice in 1595, and another one, published in Rome in 1888–92, in which the cult is referred to. See also J. S. Popović, *Žitija svetih za mesec januar,* Žitija svetih (Belgrade, 1972), 841–43. The cult was evidently established in 1082 (1084?), during the reign of Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1108), as a resolution to a prolonged controversy over the relative importance of the three church fathers; BHG³, 245. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, Ἱεροσολυμιτικὴ βιβλιοθήκη (St. Petersburg, 1891–1915), II, 250, gives the date 1082. L. Mirković, *Heortologija,* Pravoslavna liturgika, II (Belgrade, 1961), 103–4, citing other sources, gives the date 1084. On the other hand, C. Walter, "Pictures of the Clergy in the Theodore Psalter," *REB* 31 (1973), esp. 240, and note 57, indicates that the office of the Three Hierarchs was instituted "possibly about 1046." Walter also suggests (ibid., 240) that the 11th-century Theodore Psalter (London, British Museum, cod. add. 19352) includes "one of the earliest examples of the representation together of the Three Hierarchs." If my observations on the Three Hierarchs as depicted at the Cappella Palatina are correct, this would constitute the earliest known instance of the three shown *in isolation* in monumental painting, and possibly in all of Byzantine art. The same trio appears once more in the Sicilian context. Shown in the same order and separated by a window from St. Nicholas, they occur in the lowest zone of mosaic decoration on the south sanctuary wall of Cefalù Cathedral; see Demus, *Mosaics of Norman Sicily,* 13–14, pl. 7a. For the problems regarding the dating of these mosaics see below, note 63. The cult of the Three Hierarchs became popular in the 13th and later centuries. Only one church is known to have been dedicated to them in Constantinople, and it is first mentioned in the late 13th or early 14th century; see R. Janin, *La géographie*

ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin, I, 3 (Paris, 1953), 267. For the reflection of the cult in later Byzantine and post-Byzantine art see S. Petković, "Freska sa likovima Tri jerarha u crkvi sv. Nikole u Starom Slankamenu" (Eng. summary: "The Fresco Representing the Three Fathers of the Church in the Church of St. Nicholas in Stari Slankamen"), *Zbornik za likovne umetnosti* 6 (1970), 315–30.

[34] See note 27, above.

[35] Kitzinger, "Portrait," 30–31, and note 9, with a cautious interpretation of earlier literature; also Beck, "First Mosaics," 123–24.

[36] Bern, Bürgerbibliothek, Cod. 120, fol. 139; also Pietro da Eboli, *Liber ad Honorem Augusti. Secondo il codice 120 della Biblioteca Civica di Berna,* ed. G. B. Siragusa, FStI. Scrittori, secolo XII (Rome, 1905), pl. XLV.

the structure is marked by two towers and by crenellations, both of which are hallmarks of Norman ecclesiastical architecture in Sicily. Directly below the king's throne we see a large closed wooden door. It suggests that a space exists below the room in which the royal audience is taking place. The existence of this lower floor is also attested to by the presence of a dark window next to the staircase on the right side. We see here, then, the basic architectural ingredients of palace iconography. The "stratified" spatial articulation provides an appropriate architectural image for a royal or imperial palace. Such symbolic imagery was in use since late antique times and was known and employed in both Byzantium and the West throughout the Middle Ages.[37]

III

Returning to the plan of the Cappella Palatina (Fig. 1), we refer again to the curious juxtaposition of its domed eastern part and its basilican western component. The latter component has invariably been seen as a product of western ecclesiastical planning. It should be noted from the outset, however, that despite the general formal resemblance of a three-aisled basilica, this part of the Cappella Palatina could not have functioned in the same terms and, therefore, was not intended to be a "typical" western church. The chief departure from the typical basilican church plan is the elimination of the main axial door and its replacement by the dais for the royal throne against the west wall (Fig. 11). The date of this throne and the surrounding decoration is still debated, but the fact that a door was never built in the west wall would suggest that the present or a similar arrangement was intended from the outset. The deletion of the axial doorway precludes any processional entries into the church and thereby eliminates one of the fundamental virtues of a basilican scheme. The placement of a royal throne against the west wall, furthermore, would suggest that it is highly unlikely that the nave and the side aisles were ever used as in a conventional church, lest the congregation have had their backs turned toward the king during the services. The entire planning scheme of the Cappella Palatina, in my opinion, requires rethinking.

In the first place, the presence of two royal seats

suggests that the entire building would probably not have functioned as an entity. Instead, I suggest that, in addition to the architectural and decorative division between the eastern and western sections, we should also consider a functional divide separating the two components of the building. Furthermore, I propose that the two parts of the building had reversed directions. The eastern part, actually the chapel itself, was oriented, while the western, basilican hall was occidented (Fig. 1). The royal throne at the west end, then, would have been seen as the formal and functional counterpoint to the altar table in the main apse of the chapel. The western part would have functioned as a type of a palace hall, an aula, in which the king would be seated in majesty on axis, at the far end of the hall.

Such a juxtaposition of a "secular" hall and a chapel may appear peculiar but would have been neither without precedents nor foreign to the Byzantine way of thinking.[38] The rich textual evidence on the vanished complex of the Great Palace of the Byzantine emperors in Constantinople provides us with many useful comparanda. The first of these concerns the so-called Chrysotriklinos, a large octagonal domed hall that functioned as a throne room of the Byzantine emperors. Built by Justin II (565–578), the Chrysotriklinos was decorated under Emperor Tiberius (578–582).[39] This decoration was destroyed during the period of Iconoclasm and restored by Emperor Michael III (856–866).[40] The imperial throne was situated in the eastern apse, while seven(?) additional niches evidently surrounded the octagonal hall.[41] The one closest to the main apse on the north side contained the oratory of St. Theodore, which also doubled as the imperial vestry.[42] It was separated from the main space merely by hanging curtains, as was apparently also the case with all the other niches.[43] Thus a movable partition would have

[37] K. W. Swoboda, *Römische und romanische Paläste. Eine architekturgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, 2nd ed. (Vienna-Cologne-Graz, 1959), passim; also Mango, *The Brazen House*, 87–92.

[38] I. Lavin, "The House of the Lord. Aspects of the Role of Palace Triklinia in the Architecture of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages," *ArtB* 44 (1962), 1–27, esp. 23–24; also Averil Cameron, "Elites and Icons in the Late Sixth Century," *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition*, ed. M. Mullet and R. Scott (Birmingham, 1981), 205–34, esp. 216–18, and note 54.

[39] Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 128. For an extensive discussion of the Chrysotriklinos see J. Ebersolt, *Le Grand Palais de Constantinople, et le Livre des cérémonies* (Paris, 1910), 77–92.

[40] Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 184.

[41] Ibid.; also Ebersolt, *Grand Palais*, 79–80, and foldout pl. for the ideal reconstruction of the Chrysotriklinos.

[42] Ebersolt, *Grand Palais*, 86; also Constantin Porphyrogénète, *Le livre des cérémonies*, ed. A. Vogt, Commentaire (Paris, 1935), 23–24.

[43] Ebersolt, *Grand Palais*, 83–87, esp. 87.

been the only barrier between the function of the oratory and that of the main hall of the Chryso-triklinos. It would not be too difficult to imagine such a separation between the eastern and western sections of the Cappella Palatina, though we have no archeological or other evidence to confirm its existence. In any case, it is clear that the spatial proximity of the eastern and western components of the Cappella Palatina need not discourage us from further consideration of their distinctive roles.

The case of the Chrysotriklinos is interesting from yet another viewpoint. Its elaborate interior decoration included, among other images, a mosaic of an enthroned(?) Christ above the emperor's throne.[44] This arrangement has been described by Irving Lavin as perhaps the first instance "that the emperor's role as Christ's vicar was given an appropriate decorative setting, still within an essentially secular context."[45] Yet Lavin stressed that the choice of subjects in the decorative program was not only of religious character, but that it actually embodied "essential features of an important phase in the development of the Byzantine system for the decoration of churches."[46] The same kind of secular-religious "ambivalence" is apparent in the nave of the Cappella Palatina where a huge image of an enthroned Christ surrounded by SS. Peter and Paul dominates the west wall, directly above the royal throne (Fig. 11). The rest of the nave decoration, as is well known, involves the Old Testament cycle and standing figures and busts of saints, while the side aisles display the lives of SS. Peter and Paul, the patron saints of the chapel. Judging by the decorative program of the Chryso-triklinos, such an emphasis on religious subjects would not have been out of line for a royal hall.

Another hall in the Great Palace of the Byzantine emperors in Constantinople of some relevance in our discussion is the so-called Kainourgion. The Kainourgion was built by Basil I (867–886).[47] The Vita Basilii is somewhat ambiguous about the exact form of this building. It is clear, however, that it had a dome at its eastern end, that its main part was supported by sixteen columns, and that the wall above the columns up to the ceiling, as well as the interior of the dome, was decorated with mosaics.[48] The striking similarity with

the Cappella Palatina is apparent, especially if we take into account that the total number of its structural columns, including the two engaged pairs at the east and west ends, comes to sixteen (Fig. 1). From the Vita Basilii one also learns that the columns of the Kainourgion were of different materials and that their surfaces were articulated in a different manner; two of the lot are described as having been of the spiral variety.[49] It seems of some consequence that among the Cappella Palatina columns made of various materials, and with different surface textures, two are also spiral. These two columns appear on the western side of the two pairs of columns that support the triumphal arch separating the nave from the sanctuary and that ultimately support the dome (Fig. 11).[50] Their appearance in this location may be more than a fortuitous occurrence. I shall return to that possibility below. At this point it should be noted that in the general aesthetic attitude, in the choice of sculptural and mosaic decoration, the Cappella Palatina appears to have had a great deal in common with the Kainourgion, a Middle Byzantine palatine hall.

Links with aulic architecture of the Great Palace can be extended one step further. The so-called Mouchroutas was a great hall to the west of the Chrysotriklinos, constructed by one of the Comnenian emperors around the middle of the twelfth century.[51] This hall was noted for its extraordinary carved wooden ceiling featuring "domes" and stalactites, painted in vibrant colors and accented with gold leaf. The figures depicted on this ceiling wore Persian costumes, explained by the fact that the artist responsible for the entire ensemble was actually Persian.[52] The appearance of a Moslem artist working in the imperial court in Constantinople is not surprising. Examples of other artists of different nationalities employed at the Byzantine court are known, as are the cases of Byzantine artists and artisans working for Moslem patrons and other Byzantine adversaries. The description of the Mouchroutas ceiling bears a striking resemblance to the wooden ceiling above the nave of the

[44] Mango, Art of the Byzantine Empire, 184 note 9.
[45] Lavin, "House of the Lord," 23.
[46] Ibid., 22–23.
[47] Mango, Art of the Byzantine Empire, 196–97.
[48] Ibid., 197.

[49] Ibid.
[50] These two columns, as well as the rest of the columns, capitals, and bases in the Cappella Palatina, appear to be ancient spoils. It is possible that a similar antiquarian aesthetic prevailed in Constantinople at the time of the construction of the Kainourgion. On this possibility see Mango, Art of the Byzantine Empire, 197 note 67.
[51] Ibid., 228–29. I am indebted to Henry Maguire who first brought the textual evidence on the Mouchroutas to my attention.
[52] Ibid., 229.

Cappella Palatina.[53] The ceiling of the Cappella Palatina has generally been viewed as the product of the third cultural component of Norman Sicily—the Arab. Seen alongside the Byzantine domed sanctuary with its christological mosaics and the "Latin" basilican western portion of the building, the stalactite wooden ceiling of the Cappella Palatina appeared as "natural" a manifestation of Sicily's hybrid culture as the trilingual inscriptions of the same period.[54] On the basis of my analysis of similarities between the Cappella Palatina and the various halls in the Great Palace of the Byzantine emperors in Constantinople, one may question the validity of such an analogy. Indeed, the Cappella Palatina would seem to be much more in the mainstream of Middle Byzantine palatine art than previously thought possible.

My analysis of the basilican portion of the Cappella Palatina has focused on the possibility that it may have been a type of an audience hall for various ceremonies of the royal court. In large measure this notion rests on the presence of the "royal throne" against the west wall of the nave (Fig. 11). This "throne," in fact, is merely a frame for the royal throne, the seat itself now lost. This frame has been described as a symbolic *fastigium*, or a two-dimensional ciborium.[55] The marble revetment within this frame includes a low decorative arcade of scalloped pointed arches supported by stylized colonnettes. These colonnettes rest on bases that appear to "float," elevated as they are some six inches above the paved top of the podium. This peculiar arrangement suggests that the missing throne must have involved a platform of some sort, whose height would have been roughly equivalent to the height of one of the steps leading toward the platform. The total number of steps, in that case, would have been six. Six steps leading to the royal throne would have had symbolic significance, alluding to the throne of Solomon.[56] Solo-

monic associations are also present in the two guardian lions that appear within the two roundels on the spandrels above the throne-frame gable.[57] Both the six-stepped podium and the heraldic lions appear on a late twelfth-century miniature depicting the King of Sicily and Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI (Fig. 12).[58] The association with Solomon implied by this illumination is verbalized in a poem from the same manuscript.[59] Thus, at least by the end of the twelfth century, we have explicit statements regarding the parallel between the king of Sicily and Solomon. Such a notion, in all likelihood, was formulated much earlier and played a vital role in the shaping of the decorative program of the Cappella Palatina. The Solomonic associations are also found in the main domed bay of the chapel. On the spandrels of the western principal arch we find the unusually composed Presentation in the Temple (Fig. 11). Divided as it is by the form of the arch, the composition features the Virgin with Christ child, on the left, and the High Priest, Symeon, on the right. In the middle, directly above the apex of the arch, and partially truncated by it, is the unusually articulated depiction of the Temple. Directly above it, in one of the four axially aligned niches at the base of the dome, we find the figure of Solomon himself (not visible on Fig. 11). This carefully planned layout has been described by Kitzinger as a visual and symbolic pendant to the similarly divided composition of the Annunciation on the opposite, eastern arch of the same bay.[60] Directly above the Annunciation is a niche containing the standing figure of King David, as a pendant to Solomon.[61] Kitzinger's identification of the "triumphal character" of the Pre-

[53] Ibid. Aspects of the Mouchroutas ceiling described include: "hemispheres (domes)," "closely packed angles which project inward and outward (stalactites)," decoration including "images of Persians in their different costumes," and "cavities which, overlaid with gold, produce effect of a rainbow." Identical features may be noted on the ceiling of the Cappella Palatina. For the Cappella Palatina ceiling see U. Monneret de Villard, *Le pitture mussulmane al soffitto della Cappella Palatina in Palermo* (Rome, 1950); for good color illustrations see F. Gabrieli and U. Scerrato, *Gli Arabi. Cultura, contatti e tradizioni* (Milan, 1979), figs. 40–96.

[51] R. Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, Treasures of Asia (Geneva[?], 1962), 44–50.

[55] J. Deér, *The Dynastic Porphyry Tombs of the Norman Period in Sicily*, DOS 5 (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), 37 ff.

[56] I. H. Forsyth, *The Throne of Wisdom. Wood Sculptures of the Madonna in Romanesque France* (Princeton, 1972), 88, note 148.

[57] Deér, *Dynastic Tombs*, 113–16, esp. 116; E. Kitzinger, "The Mosaic Fragments in the Torre Pisana of the Royal Palace in Palermo: A Preliminary Study," *Mosaïque. Recueil d'hommages à Henry Stern* (Paris, 1983), 239–43, esp. 242–43, and pl. CLII, attributes the mosaic decoration around the throne to the reign of William I (1154–66).

[58] Bern, Bürgerbibliothek, Cod. 120, fol. 147; also Pietro da Eboli, *Liber*, pl. LIII.

[59] Pietro da Eboli, *Liber*, 114. The text of the poem, as quoted by Deér, *Dynastic Tombs*, 116, reads as follows:
Nam meus Henricus materna sede sedebit,
In qua rex Salamon sedit in orbe potens.
Talis erit sedes: ebur oxorabit in auro:
Hoc hominum sensus exuperabit opus:
Bis senos habitura gradus Henrici sedes,
Ex auro sex, sex ex adhamente gradus,
Per quos fulvescent civili more leones,
Ordine suppositi, iussa sedentis agant.

[60] Kitzinger, "Mosaics," 281 ff.

[61] E. Kitzinger, "The Descent of the Dove. Observations on the Mosaic of the Annunciation in the Cappella Palatina in Palermo," *Byzanz und der Westen. Studien zur Kunst des europäischen Mittelalters*, ed. I. Hutter (Vienna, 1984), 99–115, esp. 111, and note 46.

sentation, as well as its association with the nave behind it, reinforces our notion of the reversed orientation of the basilican part of the Cappella Palatina (Figs. 1 and 11).[62] Standing in the sanctuary and facing west, in effect, one would have been looking at the "entrance facade" of a royal hall. The "facade," opened through a "triumphal arch" and decorated with the Presentation scene, introduces the viewer into a royal, Solomonic realm. On the *sedes sapientiae* at the far end of this hall would have sat the king of Sicily, in awe-inspiring splendor reminiscent of imperial halls of the Great Palace in Constantinople. The triumphal arch, it will be recalled, rests on two pairs of freestanding columns. The western column of each of the two pairs is spiral. Thus the line of demarcation between the two parts of the building is subtly accentuated.[63] Moreover, it is tempting to think that the reason for the choice of spiral columns may have been their association with the group of spiral columns in the old shrine of St. Peter in Rome which, according to a legend, had been brought from the Temple of Jerusalem.[64]

If my interpretation of the basilican portion of the Cappella Palatina is accepted, we must return to the question of how one might have entered and exited from this hall. It will be recalled that the palace complex was entered from the ground level of the courtyard occupying the position of the present Cortile "Maqueda." From there the invited visitors would have ascended the second, main story of the palace, proceeding then into the "narthex" and, finally, into the Cappella itself

(Figs. 1, 2, 4).[65] We have seen that the placement of the royal throne against the west wall of the nave precludes the possibility of an axial entrance from the west. Beck has postulated that the doors leading from the narthex into the two aisles functioned as entrances of an "official" nature when, in her opinion, the chapel was used in a public capacity.[66] Beck's idea of how the lateral aisle doors of the chapel may have been used is essentially correct, even if one disagrees with her as to what may have been the general nature of functions accommodated in the nave. In my way of thinking, the audience invited into the king's presence would have been admitted through the aisle doors and would have been accommodated within the side aisles. Following the end of the ceremony, the visitors would probably have departed by descending the pair of stairs at the eastern ends of the side aisles.[67] Through the "crypt" they would have reached the ground floor of the main courtyard where their visit to the Cappella Palatina began. Such lateral circulation through an audience hall of this kind would have been fully in keeping with late antique and Byzantine planning customs.[68] Although one cannot be absolutely sure regarding the specific nature and number of functions for which the western part of the Cappella Palatina was suited, some suggestions are in order. It is well known that Roger II styled himself *rex et sacerdos*. [69] The role of the supreme judge of civic and ecclesiastical matters stands out as one of the possible functions that the king could have exercised in this splendid hall. The Solomonic iconography that surrounded the king would seem to have been designed with that idea in mind, striking the onlookers with awe and reinforcing the notion of the king's absolute authority.

In conclusion, the Cappella Palatina is a "hybrid" building in which a number of different functions, architectural solutions, and artistic

[62] Kitzinger, "Mosaics," 282. On the "reversed orientation" see above, 140.

[63] See also above, 141 and note 49. That this manner of spatial and structural delineation by means of spiral columns was not a coincidence may be gleaned from the sanctuary of Cefalù Cathedral, where a pair of spiral columns was executed in mosaic at the point that visually accentuates the innermost part of the sanctuary. A wide range of dates is given for this phase of decoration at Cefalù: from 1150–70 (Demus, *Mosaics of Norman Sicily*, 18) to ca. 1215, but before 1220 (T. Thieme and I. Beck, *La cattedrale normanna di Cefalù. Un frammento della civiltà socio-politica della Sicilia medioevale*, Analecta Romana Instituti Danici 8, Suppl. [1977], 42 ff).

[64] For the shrine of St. Peter see J. B. Ward-Perkins, "The Shrine of St. Peter and Its Twelve Spiral Columns," *JRS* 42 (1952), 21–33. On the impact of the spiral columns from the old shrine of St. Peter on medieval art see W. Cahn, "Solomonic Elements in Romanesque Art," *The Temple of Solomon: Architectural Fact and Medieval Tradition in Christian, Islamic and Jewish Art*, ed. J. Gutmann (Missoula, Mo., 1976), 45–72, esp. 55 ff. Cahn believes that the idea that the spiral columns in the old shrine of St. Peter came from the Temple of Solomon may have originated "as part of the Proto-Renaissance currents around the year 1200" (p. 56), but points out that the earliest known text that explicitly mentions the notion is from the period 1362–78 (ibid., 67 note 29).

[65] Beck, "First Mosaics," 126–27, 156 ff, who is also concerned with the multilevel organization of the palace complex which she attributes in part to the topography of the site. Beyond Beck's interpretation, one can suggest that the elevation of the royal box in the north wall of the chapel indicates "stratification" of the innermost, private palace context. The two-storied arrangement, on the other hand, as perceived from the main court, would have been the "public image" of the palace complex.

[66] Beck, "First Mosaics," 159–60.

[67] See above, 126.

[68] Several late antique assembly and audience halls feature doors flanking the tribunal or the dais. This problem, however, will be the subject of a separate study.

[69] Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 118 ff.

styles were ingeniously juxtaposed. This juxtaposition has generally been interpreted as a direct reflection of Sicily's "melting pot" culture. From the foregoing analysis, however, it would seem that such phenomena could just as well have been wholesale imports from Byzantium. Also Byzantine was the bold juxtaposition of "secular" and "religious" functions and the means chosen for their physical accommodation—a wooden roofed basilican hall and a fully vaulted domical church. The direct linking of two spaces intended for different functional purposes was actually a concept that would have been at home in different cultural environments around the Mediterranean basin in the course of the twelfth century. Another illumination from Pietro da Eboli's *Liber ad Honorem Augusti* offers a graphic illustration of how such juxtapositions were perceived by their contemporaries (Fig. 13).[70] This frequently reproduced illumination shows King William II (d. 1189) on his deathbed, attended by a doctor and an astrologer, both wearing Arab costumes. For us, this illumination graphically summarizes several of the essential findings of this paper. It shows the two-storied, "stratified" interior organization of the palace. The king and his retinue occupy the second story indicated as an arcade consisting of arches springing from elegant spiral columns. At the right side, and as part of the arcaded system, we see the single-bayed Cappella Regia. I would be stretching the point if I were to insist that the ailing king was actually depicted within the nave of

the Cappella Palatina. One is safe in assuming, however, that the artist was attempting to show the close relationship between the Cappella and the rest of the palace complex, both in visual and in functional terms (cf. also Fig. 3) which no longer can be appreciated in the same manner. The "polarized" internal organization of the Cappella is apparent in its architecture and in the nature of its decoration. Its eastern part *is*, in fact, the royal chapel, equipped with a royal box and decorated with a carefully planned mosaic program. Its western part, by contrast, is a royal hall with a raised dais for the accommodation of a royal throne. The juxtaposition of these two building components has been found to be rooted in palatine architecture of Constantinople, as are the various aspects of their architecture and decoration. Much as with the dissemination of Comnenian painting, echoes of Byzantine palatine architecture seem to have reverberated throughout the twelfth-century Byzantine sphere of influence—from Kiev to Palermo. In sum, the "unique" character of the Cappella Palatina may be deemed unique only in that it represents the sole fully preserved example of this type of building in the eastern Mediterranean. Its significance, therefore, stretches well beyond the shores of Sicily, helping us understand the character and meaning of an all but vanished architectural type. At the same time it demonstrates that King Roger's mimicry of the Byzantine βασιλεύς was most aptly echoed in the architectural and artistic conception of the secular-religious nucleus of his palace at Palermo.

[70] Bern, Bürgerbibliothek, Cod. 120, fol. 97; also Pietro da Eboli, *Liber*, pl. III.

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